

socialist standard

April 2016
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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

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UK election fever

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PLUS

Commons: Tragedy or Blessing?

The 'Savile Society'

The history of tipping

Confirmation bias



**Tony Blair:
coining it in**



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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to



patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic,

Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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It's election time again

ON THURSDAY 5 May, elections will be held across the country to elect members for local and district authorities in England, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly. In London, there will be elections for the Mayor and for members of the Greater London Assembly.

Through hustings, meetings and TV interviews, the various parties' candidates will be competing for votes. The Tories will be defending their record in government and claiming that their policies of cutting state expenditure to reduce the government deficit will provide a brighter future for hardworking families. The Labour Party candidates will attempt to convince voters that they have the policies to tackle inequality and the housing crisis. The Liberal Democrats will also claim that they will be working for a fairer society. UKIP will tell us that leaving the EU and curbing immigration will solve our woes. The Green Party will claim to offer a radical alternative with policies that will tackle environmental issues and

meet human needs. The Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) will argue that by taxing the rich more heavily, they will be able to invest more in the National Health Service and welfare services. The Women's Equality Party is standing for gender equality in the market place.

The Scottish Nationalist Party and Plaid Cymru will argue that independence for their respective countries from the UK is the way forward. The Unionist and Nationalist parties will be fighting for places in the Northern Irish assembly.

And yet, in practice, the results of these elections will not improve the lives of working class people. It is little wonder that some will prefer to stay at home rather than go out and vote. What the above parties have in common is that they all stand for some form of capitalism. Whether they are merely self-serving careerists or they sincerely wish to change things for the better, the aspiring politicians will come up against the reality of an economic and social system where profits come before anything else. Instead

of controlling capitalism, capitalism will control them as can be seen when George Osborne in his recent budget had to downgrade his previous estimates on future economic growth, due to the recent deterioration in the world economy.

There are political groups that recognise this and call on workers to abstain from the electoral process. We reject this approach and argue that for a socialist working class to gain political power they will need to contest elections at all levels of government in order to capture the machinery of the state. Elections also provide an opportunity for the Socialist Party to make the case against capitalism and for socialism – a world of common ownership and free access to all that is produced. For these reasons, the Socialist Party is contesting three constituencies in London and one in Wales. Our election manifestos and details of how to help can be found elsewhere in this issue.

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Blam! Kerpow! Trump!

IF LIFE sometimes imitates art, then politics sometimes imitates a Marvel comic.

Those sinister cowed crusaders of the hacker group Anonymous, who have in the past tilted at the windmills of the Vatican and the Turkish state, recently decided to declare cyber-war on Isis. Whether Isis felt any frisson of alarm at this development has not been reported, but you've got to love the showboating chutzpah of pimply computer geeks in Guy Fawkes masks who think they can take on real murdering thugs in ski masks. Did we say Marvel comics? More like the *IT Crowd* meets the *Sopranos*. Fingers crossed the geeks don't come a cropper. If the thugs ever find out who they are, there'll be more than connections getting cut off.

Not content with waging holy jihad, now Anonymous have also declared war on Donald Trump. Now, as much as anyone else we loathe that ruddy, right-wing billionaire bigot, who like some cartoon antichrist rampages across the headlines with the reckless arrogance of the untouchably rich. He really is Marvel material - Spiderman's newspaper boss J Jonah Jameson brought hideously to life. Nothing would be too bad for that man. We hope that acute poverty descends and crushes him like a comet from heaven. We hope he puts all his cash into an Armenian Ponzi scheme. We hope his balls drop off.

But still, and for the sake of balance, there is something we need to ask the keyboard bandits of Anonymous - something quite important which they apparently are not asking themselves.

Just who do they think they are?

The thing is, nobody asked them to be

vigilante heroes. Nobody elected them. They don't have a mandate. They don't have the right to make unilateral decisions about who the world's renegades, rats and scumbags are and then declare war on them on our collective behalf. And if they are *not* doing it on our collective behalf, well then they are renegades themselves, which makes them part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Because the solution has to be democratic action, open, accountable, informed, discussed, participated in,

agreed upon. Whatever Anonymous are up to, it isn't this. However

good these 'good guys' think they are - however good we think they are - when they act as if democracy doesn't matter that's the same as perverting it.

When you hack a computer system - just because you can - you are not asking, you are dictating. The problem

with a world that runs on computers is that there are suddenly a lot of people who, with a bit of tech knowledge, could decide to dictate from their bedrooms. And seeing that the democratic process seems able to trump forth a bad smell like Donald may make these bedroom activists even less likely to believe in democratic processes and more likely to play politics via the virus and the DOS attack. And that way, as they say, madness lies.

It's not just the hackers. Last month we saw Tim Cook's Apple Corporation stick two fingers up at the FBI who, as you will recall, wanted Apple to break its own phone security protocols so that the Feds could read the private messages of two Islamic assassins. Apple made huge play of civil liberties issues, of their 'right' not to be coerced by federal government, and of their 'responsibility' to their customers.

Rather surprisingly, or perhaps not, the press sided with Apple. In fact Apple felt entitled to take the high moral ground as defenders of 'liberty' by calling the FBI request a 'stretch' of the law that would have appalled America's founding fathers.

That's pretty damn rich coming from a capitalist corporation run by unelected tycoons whose own workers certainly

don't have a company vote and whose future intentions are about as far from democratic liberalism as it's possible to get. Just ask the Chinese Apple workers throwing themselves off rooftops.

Anyone would think the corporations really run capitalism and politicians are nothing but dumb finger-puppets. But take heart, Hilary Finger-Puppet and not Donald Duck Finger-Puppet will probably get the top job in the White House, so that's alright then. Oh, wait...

10-4 Good Buddy

Excitement is revving in UK transport quarters as George Osborne has announced trials of driverless lorries on a quiet stretch of the M6 in Cumbria (BBC Online, 16 March). The potential fortune saved in the cost of goods distribution - through not having to pay driver wages or stick to tachograph hours - is pushing autonomous road technology ahead despite reservations by many stakeholders, including even Google, whose own unblemished driverless record perished recently when their car hit a bus. For one thing, it's by no means certain that sensors in driverless vehicles are good enough yet to cope with all weather and light conditions, nor is it clear that they can correctly interpret the gestures of human traffic cops. Worse, they are still rather too easy to hack, or fool with lasers into swerving to avoid non-existent objects. And if they run you over, who exactly is liable? As we've seen before with downloading and also with 3D printing, the technology has already raced round the world while the legal framework is having breakfast in bed.

The Cumbria trial, however, hopes to avoid most of these problems by going in convoys of ten trucks, with a human driver in the lead truck. Cue for a particularly cheesy 1970s song about convoys at this point. But the AA points out that, with more entrances and exits than any other motorway system in the world, the UK is not going to be able to accommodate 10-truck convoys, because of all the other vehicles trying to get on and off the motorway.

There's an obvious hi-tech solution to this. Create a special single lane for these truck convoys, then link all the trucks together and mount them on steel rails to save fuel and reduce drag. Instead of driving the lead truck, the driver would be driving the entire chain, or you might call it a 'train'. You could probably run passenger versions of these 'trains' too, with perhaps quiet coaches and restaurant cars.

Funny that nobody's ever thought of this before. **PJS**



Wales or the World?

That's the issue in the Wales Assembly election – says Brian Johnson, the Socialist Party of Great Britain candidate in Swansea West

'Could the Welsh Assembly be the most important thing that has ever happened to Wales?'

This was the question posed by a journalist Brian Walters writing in the South Wales Evening Post in March 1999 shortly before the first Assembly elections. He suggested that the Assembly would profoundly affect our lives deciding issues on education, health, housing, transport.

16 years on, is Wales any better? Are the problems in Wales – job insecurity, poverty, crime, poor healthcare -- any less than anywhere else in Britain?

The answer has to be 'no'. The reason for this is clear. These problems don't come from particular constitutional arrangements. They come from the basic way society is organised – production for profit and ownership of the vast majority of the wealth by a tiny minority of people: the global system of capitalism.

The other parties

This is what all other political parties exist to administer. They have different ideas on how that system can be best maintained, but all agree it must be retained.

Many of their supporters have good intentions but are unaware that, in campaigning for these, they are helping to maintain this built-in system of minority privilege. However different the policies of Corbyn seem from those of Cameron, they offer no alternative to the present way of

running society.

No matter how well-meaning politicians may be, they can't control the system – it controls them. The best any government can do is ride the storms of the market.

So what's the alternative?

We propose an alternative to the system based on ownership of capital and market forces that currently exists in Wales, the UK and worldwide.

This alternative is a society of common ownership that we call **socialism**.

But not 'socialism' as you probably know it. Not the type of dictatorships that collapsed in Russia and elsewhere and that were in fact a form of state capitalism.

Not the various schemes for state control put forward by some in the Labour Party.

For us socialism means something completely different and something much better. We are talking about:

- a world community without states or frontiers based on participatory democracy
- a society without buying and selling where everyone has access to what they require to satisfy their needs, without the rationing system that is money

• a society where people use the earth's abundant resources rationally and sustainably, and freely contribute their knowledge, skills and experience to produce what is needed

To sum up:

- If you don't like present-day society
- If you're fed up with the way so many people are forced to live – hanging on for dear life to a job that gives little satisfaction and doing it just for the money
- If you are sick of seeing grinding poverty alongside obscene wealth
- If you are sick of the Earth being abused by corporations who couldn't care less about the future or the environment
- If you think the root cause of most problems is the market system and the governments that maintain it

... then you're thinking like we are.

What you can do

We are not promising to give you the society we describe. We are not putting ourselves forward as leaders.

The new society is one without leaders just as it is one without owners and wage-slaves. It is a wholly democratic society, which can only be achieved when you – and enough like-minded people – join together to bring it about peacefully and democratically.

If you agree with this, you will obviously not want to vote for anyone but our candidate. In casting your vote for Brian Johnson, the Socialist Party of Great Britain candidate, you will be voting for the kind of socialism you – and we – stand for.

Offers of help in the campaign gratefully received - please contact Swansea Branch at 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624.

Thought About Joining The Socialist Party?

For further information about about The Socialist Party of Great Britain, return this form to: **The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.**

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Halo Halo

Answers from Genesis (and the Koran)

THE DIFFERENCE between philosophy and religion, as someone once pointed out, is that philosophy is questions which may never be answered, and religion is answers which may never be questioned. And the answers we get from some religionists are staggering.

Ken Ham, for example, an ex-science teacher (thank goodness for the 'ex') and now the president of Answers in Genesis, a fundamentalist Christian outfit, teaches that the Book of Genesis should be taken as historical fact, that the universe is no more than about 6,000 years old, and that dinosaurs once co-existed with genetically

modern humans. His smart-arse answer to anyone who disagrees with his views on evolution and the origin of life is 'were you there?' (He, presumably, was there when God was creating the universe, Eve was in the Garden of Eden sharing an apple with the serpent and Adam was riding around, Fred Flintstone style, on his dinosaur).

He recently ruffled a few feathers on the Richard Dawkins Foundation website (where they don't suffer religious fools gladly) with a Facebook post describing the teaching of science to children as a form of child abuse. Teaching children that they are sinners, and liable to an eternity of pain and hellfire unless they live their lives in accordance with Mr Ham's fantasies is, apparently, not abusive.

It is not only Christians whose lives need to be governed by ancient books

of nightmares of course. The *Newsweek* website recently reported that a powerful Pakistani religious body that advises the government on the compatibility of laws with Islam (yes, you read that correctly – they have a council of mullahs to make sure their laws meet Allah's requirements) declared a new law that criminalises violence against women to be 'un-Islamic'.

The new act passed by the Province of Punjab, where in 2013 more than 5,800 cases of violence against women were reported, gives legal protection to women from domestic, psychological and sexual violence and calls for the creation of an abuse reporting hot-line.

In the past this religious council has ruled that DNA cannot be used as primary evidence in rape cases, supported a law which required women alleging rape to get four male witnesses to testify in court, and blocked a bill to impose harsher penalties for marrying off 8 or 9 year-old girls, so Allah's hardly going to like this one is he?

'This whole law is wrong' argued one confused old cleric, spouting passages from the Koran to back up his point. And another complained, bitterly 'This law makes a man insecure'. It's political correctness gone mad, obviously, a total lack of common sense. But no doubt they'll be able to live with it. They've still got that passage in the Koran that allows a man to beat his wife when necessary.

NW



The Genesis Expo Creationist museum in Portsmouth, UK



George Osborne, Paul Mason and Marx

SPEAKING IN the House of Commons on 1 March George Osborne called the journalist and broadcaster Paul Mason a 'revolutionary Marxist'. To which Mason indignantly replied:

'As to Mr Osborne's claim that I am 'revolutionary Marxist' it is completely inaccurate. I am a radical social democrat who favours the creation of a peer-to-peer sector (co-ops, open source, etc) alongside the market and the state, as part of a long transition to a post-capitalist economy. There's a comprehensive critique of Bolshevism in my latest book, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*.'

Mason wasn't always a critic of Bolshevism. For many years he was a member of Workers Power, the Trotskyist group that calls for a 'Fifth International' (not that that made him a revolutionary Marxist either, just an insurrectionary Leninist). This may have been what

Osborne had in mind. If so, this would be unfair since Mason left Workers Power years ago. In fact during a time when Mason was a Trotskyist Osborne was a member of the notorious Bullingdon Club. What is that they say about people in glass houses . . . ?

More likely is that, in Osborne's eyes, anybody who criticises capitalism, as Mason has done, is automatically some sort of a Marxist. But, as Mason made clear in his reply, he is not a revolutionary, but wants only to gradually reform capitalism into something else, as the Labour and European Social Democratic parties used to.

Marx was a critic of capitalism but he had no illusions about it being possible either to make it work in the interest of the non-owning, producing majority or to gradually reform it into something else. He advocated the winning of political power to use this to uproot capitalism and bring in what he variously described as 'a co-operative society based on the common ownership of the means of production', or 'co-operation and the possession in common of the land and the means of production produced by labour itself', 'a community of free individuals,

carrying on their work with the means of production in common'. In short, the use of political power to carry out such a revolution in the basis of society.

In this sense 'revolutionary Marxist' is a tautology, but Osborne will have added 'revolutionary' to suggest that Mason favoured violent insurrection as he would know that this is what many people understand by the word. William Morris had already dealt with this as long ago as 1884 when he wrote that 'the word Revolution, which we Socialists are so often forced to use ... does not necessarily mean a change accompanied by riot and all kinds of violence' and that 'we use the word revolution in its etymological sense, and mean by it a change in the basis of society'.

Marx did not analyse capitalism with a view to coming up with policies for governments to adopt. He had no advice to give on this as his analysis showed that there was no policy governments could pursue that would make capitalism operate for the benefit of the non-owning majority. That is why he advocated the working class take political action to revolutionise the basis of society.



Questions...? Answers...?

IN THE form which we know today, Prime Minister's Questions began as recently as 1961. What a brilliant idea; a time when the person at the very head of the government and the British state machine made themselves available to be probed, exposed, ridiculed by an assembly of self-publicists operating under the title of Representatives Of The People. Very democratic and progressive; how did we survive before it was invented? But it has not turned out quite as promised. To begin with, at the appropriate time the House of Commons is always tightly packed and disciplined – by the Whips if not by that gaggle of competing ambitions – as required by their party. The Prime Minister is in place on the Front Bench after the short journey from Downing Street where advice was taken from highly paid, intensively organised assistants most accurately known as Spin Doctors who have the job of anticipating the questions – or more accurately the grilling and the verbal missiles – with sneers or derision or curses. Much of the proceedings, despite the plentifully repeated promises that it is all uniquely informative, are often lost in the uproar of jeers or abuse from both sides.

Nye Bevan

A recent example of this was in February when a debate which was centred on the number of week-end deaths in hospitals descended into the customary Tory claim that, in defiance of so many obstacles, they are fashioning a



bigger, happier, more curative National Health Service (no matter how the doctors and nurses and other workers see it). And in support of this David Cameron felt able to claim that his government would have had the support of the late Nye Bevan. Predictably, Jeremy Corbyn

was so audacious as to have that latter-day Labour hero squirming in his grave. It was also enough to have the Labour back bencher Carolyn Harris chipping in that Cameron should 'ask your mother' about it – a reference to some woman who recently signed a petition against some

proposed spending cuts near where she lives. Which naturally provoked Angela Eagle, the Shadow Business Secretary crouching on the Front Bench, to advise all around her – including the TV cameras – to 'ask his mum'.

Clothes

Cameron took the opportunity to use his mother's vote-catching talents to do as he was advised from the other bench, saying that if he did ask for guidance from her he would expect her to look across the despatch box and command Jeremy Corbyn '...put on a proper suit, do up your tie and sing the national anthem' – which released a roar of laughter, applause and rapture, intrusive as a jet taking off, from the Tory oafs and encouraged Cameron to adopt an expression of self-congratulation at his breathtaking wit. It was, in other words a typical episode in the life of Prime Ministers' Questions. Corbyn, meanwhile,



took confidence from his carefully dishevelled appearance – rumpled shirt, baggy trousers, loose tie – and his proper memory of his late mother Naomi, a peace campaigner who met his father when they were at a meeting in support of the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War. He steadfastly affirmed that she would have said '...stand up for the principle of a health service free at the point of use' because that is what she dedicated her life to, as did so many people of her generation'. And later, as he prepared for a television appearance, 'I gotta do my tie up because of the Prime Minister. He's actually jealous of the jacket. You know what he's jealous of? That I can go into the great shopping centre of the world -Holloway Road N7. And he's stuck in Bond Street'.

Magistrate

Which is a fair comment about someone – even if they are Prime Minister – who selectively refers to a mother who comes from a succession of hereditary baronets,

one of whom died in the saddle crossing a field while out chasing foxes with a Hunt at Aldermaston. Mrs Mary Cameron, who now lives in a comfortably rural cottage in Berkshire, is a retired magistrate who in her time disposed of, among others, demonstrators against nuclear weapons; Cameron himself said that '...one of the biggest challenges that she had, and one



Mary Cameron (far right) with Hon. Mrs R.F. Watson, and Ian Cameron

of the reasons she had to hand out so many short sentences, was badly behaved CND protesters outside Greenham Common'. So it was quite an event when she supported that petition, protesting against

the Oxfordshire Council intention to save some £8 million by cutting back on the budget for the local childrens' services. Under threat are some 44 centres, described by protesters as '...a lifeline to new parents who rely on locally accessible advice and support when it is most needed. Cutting these essential services would leave families vulnerable and isolated, and fail an entire generation of children'. Another signature on the petition is of one Claire Currie, who condemns the proposed cuts as '...a great, great error...a very short-sighted decision'. But she has a history as a long-term activist, including protests against the Newbury by-pass and with the CND. She is also David Cameron's aunt but she is doubtful if he will be so impressed by this relationship as to influence the Oxfordshire Tories: 'Well let's hope that it makes a difference but I doubt it will'.

Answers

Mary Cameron refused to discuss the matter of her signing that petition and did not give a reason. Perhaps she had developed some ideas from her son about where it would have led her. Faced by that stark example from Oxfordshire of the class-originating poverty of capitalist society and the misery it inflicts on human beings, what could she have said that would have been notable? Insightful? Original? Constructive? How would she have confronted the superficialities of capitalist politics and of the leaders who practise them day after day? There are countless examples of them floundering helplessly when confronted with the true measures of this society. Prime Minister's Questions. It is time we gave the answers. IVAN

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South London branch. Meets 1st Tues. 7pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811.

West London branch. Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY. Contact: 020 8740 6677. tenner@abelgratis.com

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West Midlands regional branch. Meets last Sun. 3pm, the Briar Rose pub, 25 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RE. (Check before attending). Contact: vincent. otter@globalnet.co.uk. 01242 675357.

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Southeast Manchester. Contact: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH.

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Yorkshire regional branch. Contact: Edward Craggs, Sutton Farm, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, Yorkshire, YO51 9ER. 01423 322781. ralph.craggs@gmail.com.

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Kent and Sussex regional branch. Meets 2nd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org 07973 142701.

South West regional branch. Meets 2nd Sat

of even months. Railway Tavern, Salisbury, 2pm (check before attending). Contact: Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. 0117 9511199.

Brighton Discussion Group. Contact: Anton Pruden, anton@pruden.me

Canterbury. Contact: Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB.

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Edinburgh branch. Meets 1st Thurs. 7-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. Contact: J. Moir.

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Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

Glasgow branch. Meets 3rd Weds. at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105. peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

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Ayrshire. Contact: Paul Edwards 01563 541138. rainbow3@btopenworld.com.

Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Weds.

7-9pm. Contact: F.Anderson 07724 082753.

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Swansea branch. Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Contact: Geofrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624.

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A family from the Brazilian Tucuxi tribe at the World Social Forum



'These forests are our life, but they are being taken from us. Outsiders have a financial view of the land. They see it as money. We see it as life. We have to win... for the future of our people.' **Nicholas Fredericks**, Wapichan people, Guyana

'These lands are our livelihoods. From these lands we were able to harvest resources. The land belonged to us, the water belonged to us. From this, we were able to live. When we had common land we felt free.' **Mansa Ram**, from a community in India's Udaipur where lands are under threat.

IN 1968 Garrett Hardin notoriously argued that collectively owned resources or 'commons' will be over-used and destroyed because no individual has an interest in protecting them for the long term, while everyone has an incentive to grab what they can before the others wreck it. His pessimistic analysis was that collective ownership doesn't work and the commons should be privatised or nationalised.

Elinor Ostrom, surprising winner in 2009 of Nobel Prize for economics, from her lifetime's study of real-life commonly owned lands and resources, concluded that communities can and do successfully manage vital commonly owned resources. A recent report by various NGOs, *Common Ground: Securing land rights and safeguarding the earth*, summarised below, argues that Ostrom was right.

Indigenous peoples and local communities protect half the world's land, but formally own just 10 percent. Indigenous and community lands are lands used, managed or governed collectively, under community-based governance. This

governance is often based on longstanding traditions defining, distributing and regulating rights to land, individually or collectively, and is usually referred to as customary or indigenous land tenure.

Community lands are owned and managed by a variety of women and men, usually farmers, pastoralists, hunter-gatherers, fisher-folk and others using resources such as forests, water bodies and pastures as a common resource. But they are not static. Every generation adjusts how they use the land to meet new needs and aspirations. Indigenous and community lands are as important to the future as to the past. The 'Commons' are lands that communities maintain as their shared property. As such, they can be considered the heart of indigenous and community lands.

Some indigenous peoples and local communities use all their land as shared property. Others do not, and allocate lands to individuals and families within the community; however, the community exercises jurisdiction over the entire lands, which are held and managed collectively. Lands for grazing and wildlife, forests and woodlands, mountaintops, sacred sites, lakes and rivers are usually retained as shared property. These lands are the most vulnerable to land grabbing.

A frequent charge against collective ownership of pastures and forests is that it locks people into poverty. In reality, community tenure – either through collective rights or individual rights under community jurisdiction – is often much more productive than statistics suggest. This is partly because national statistics typically only count cash sales or income that is taxed. Around half of rural households in India derive part of their income

Commons: Tragedy or Blessing?

from resources on common or state lands often officially categorised as wastelands. For example, millions of rural Indians live by harvesting wild bamboo. But statistics rarely capture this.

Up to 2.5 billion people depend on indigenous and community lands, which make up over 50 percent of the land on the planet; they legally own just one-fifth. The remaining five billion hectares remain unprotected and vulnerable to land grabs from more powerful entities like governments and corporations. Ninety percent of Africa's rural land is undocumented, leaving rural communities vulnerable to land-grabbing. The lack of land rights is directly linked, the report says, to the continent's high poverty rates, where almost half of the population lives on less than \$1.25 a day. 'African countries and their communities could effectively end land grabs, grow significantly more food across the region, and transform their development prospects if they can modernise the complex government procedures that govern land ownership and management,' the World Bank reported. Modernisation, it said, required not the removal of rights from communities but the 'documentation of communal lands... recognising customary land rights and regularising tenure rights on public land'.

Collectively-owned forests and pastures are better protected and cared for than government lands. A review of 130 local studies in fourteen countries found that community-run forests suffer less deforestation and store more carbon than other forests. Another international study found that state-protected areas are deforested on average four times faster than neighbouring community forests. This evidence contradicts decades of conservation thinking, which long held that forest communities were widely responsible for deforestation through shifting cultivation.

Research now shows that under most circumstances, forests swiftly regrow after cultivators move on. The evidence, says the report, also contradicts decades of conservation practice in which governments, often at the urging of environmental groups, have removed indigenous peoples and local communities from forests in the name of environmental protection. The scale of this dispossession – and the resulting hunger and poverty – remains undocumented, but has undoubtedly affected millions of women and men. **ALJO**

Big Business, Big Tony Blair Dictators, Big Money

Blair's successful career of getting people to vote for him and make him Prime Minister, 1997-2007, meant he was able after leaving 10 Downing St to move into the very remunerative world of advising wealthy companies and foreign governments.

He made a good start. J. P. Morgan, the American investment bank, hired him to advise them for a fee of about £2.5 million a year. He got other deals from Zurich Insurance, Bernard Arnault (part of a luxury goods conglomerate), and the International Sanitary Supply Association (*Times*, 2 March). His main firm, Tony Blair Associates, has been doing very well ever since. Not only rich businessmen, but autocratic rulers round the world, can count on Blair's support, at a price.

Egypt

In 2013 Egypt's first ever elected government (like every other government round the world, it was disreputable and unscrupulous – but it was elected) and its president Mohamed Morsi were overthrown by an army coup, a thousand 'dissidents' being killed, and thousands more arrested. Blair hurried over to Cairo to see the new army leader, Abdel al-Sisi, and went on Egyptian television to give his support. 'We can debate the past and it's probably not very fruitful to do so, but right now I think it's important the international community gets behind the leadership here.' Previously Blair had given his backing to an earlier Egyptian dictator, Hosni Mubarak, and to the Libyan dictator, Muammar Gaddafi (*Guardian*, 30 January 2014).

Blair keeps up a high moral tone. In 2007 he went to China (in a private jet, naturally) and told a meeting of

philanthropists (who paid £1500 a head – more than a Chinese production worker then got in a year) that you should be judged not on what you do for yourself but on what you do for others. He made \$500,000 for that speech.

Kazakhstan

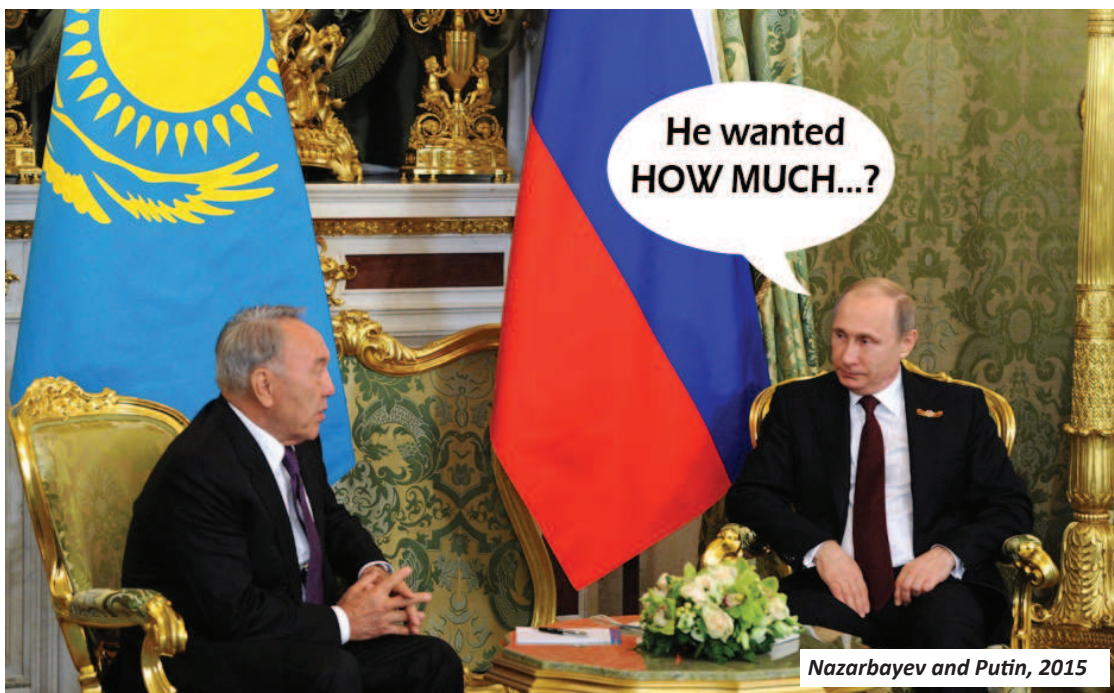
One of his main clients is Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, who pays Blair at least \$13 million a year (some say twice as much as that). In the days when the country was part of the Soviet Union, Nazarbayev rose to become First Secretary of the local state-capitalist party (for propaganda purposes it was deceitfully called the 'Communist' Party); that is, he was the local ruler. Then when the Soviet Union broke up, Nazarbayev held an election for a new President, and (believe it or not) easily won with 91.5 percent of the vote. Unlike rulers in countries with a bit more free speech, he gets more popular the longer he rules. He's been re-elected several times, and was able to announce that he had won the 2015 contest with 98 percent of the vote. The Human Rights Watch perhaps helped to explain this, when it pointed out that 'Kazakhstan heavily restricts freedom of assembly, speech, and religion . . . Torture remains common in places of detention.' Nazarbayev was anti-religious in the Soviet days when that was the party line, but since then has become an enthusiast for Islam (most Kazakhs are Muslims), and has done the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. There was an awkward business in 2011 when government forces killed fourteen unarmed protestors at a demonstration. Blair was able to advise Nazarbayev how to deal with the public relations angle, and sent him 500 words for his next speech to explain it all away. All this goes down very well with other governments: Russia has given Nazarbayev six medals, and other countries have handed over another twenty-seven – including the dear old United Kingdom, which made him an 'Honourable Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George'. So no one could object to Blair's giving (or rather selling) a helping hand to a knight backed by a couple of saints. (What saints George and Mick really think of Nazarbayev hasn't yet been disclosed.)

Azerbaijan

Another of Blair's clients is Azerbaijan. Heydar Aliyev was the KGB chief when



Paul Kagame



Nazarbayev and Putin, 2015

Azerbaijan was in the old Stalinist Russian empire, and soon after independence he became president, until he died in 2003. They know how to handle these matters in dictatorships, and (as with Assad in Syria) Heydar's son – Ilham Aliyev – was immediately installed as ruler. Ilham has a nice little family, two daughters and a son, and they all soon found themselves owning large Azerbaijani companies, not to mention valuable real property. Ilham's son, another Heydar, actually bought some luxury mansions in a Dubai development when he was only eleven years old. Clearly a promising lad. No prizes for guessing who will be groomed to succeed his father in due course as Azerbaijan's freely-elected leader. (In fact the family spent \$44 million altogether on Dubai mansions, despite the fact that Ilham's official salary is only \$228,000; they must have been saving their pennies.) Blair went to Baku (Azerbaijan's capital) in 2009 and made a speech boosting the regime, in return for a fee of nearly \$150,000. 'Journalists and human rights activists have been intensely harassed and savagely beaten' (*Guardian* 6 January 2015), and opponents find themselves in jail; the security forces have arrested demonstrators 'in order to protect citizens' constitutional rights' (which is one way of putting it).

Rwanda

Among numerous other clients is the ruler of Rwanda. Blair is 'an uncritical friend and well-paid adviser to the likes of Paul Kagame of Rwanda, a violent authoritarian' (*Economist*, 5 March). In that auspicious country, those who speak against the leader would do well to make their wills. A number of politicians who opposed Kagame have come to a sticky end, while more than one who hoped to baffle Kagame's strong-arm boys by fleeing abroad has met with a violent and unexplained demise even in a 'safe



Ilham Aliyev, 2014

haven'.

Blair's wife Cherie is in on the act. She has founded a firm to provide 'strategic counsel to governments, corporates and private clients'. One of her customers is the president of the Maldives, Abdulla Yameen, who has put the leaders of three opposition parties in jail, along with another 1700 opponents.

Providing help to despotic potentates round the world certainly pays off. Blair's personal fortune is now estimated at £70 million. Windrush

Ventures (which advises foreign governments; Firebush Ventures looks after affluent companies and sovereign wealth funds) – has just trebled its annual profits to £2.6 million, and the average pay of its forty-eight staff is now over £100,000 (*Daily Telegraph*, 6 March). A tax specialist professor at City University said Blair when prime minister used to favour 'accountability and transparency'; now he is 'embarrassingly silent about his sources of income'. Blair's London home is a capacious house in Connaught Square (once owned by John Adams, later the American President), near Hyde Park, along with a substantial mews house behind, both guarded round the clock by armed policemen. His country residence, which he bought in 2008, is a Queen Anne mansion in Buckinghamshire, complete with tennis court and swimming pool. In fact Blair is now believed to own thirty-six properties.

Blair is keen to keep on good terms with the other world, and has founded 'Tony Blair's Faith Foundation' to support all the major religions (with its main office in Grosvenor Square, just across from the US embassy); so perhaps he feels that in return the various supernatural rulers of the universe are supporting him, however dubious his activities. Blair's excuse for joining in the invasion of Iraq (which kickstarted the total chaos across the Middle East today – Syria has 250,000 dead, and half the population are 'displaced', i.e. refugees) – his excuse was that Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator (as indeed he was). He keeps saying he will defend the assault on Iraq 'till my dying day'. How ironic it is that Blair is now making his fortune by supporting other equally brutal dictators.

Socialists have always pointed out that Labour governments, and Labour Prime Ministers, can do no more than attempt to run capitalism more efficiently, and pretend to make people better off. Tony Blair is now apparently engaged in an earnest effort to prove socialists right – at least he's doing his best to make at least one ex-Prime Minister better off.

ALWYN EDGAR

Jimmy Savile, wealth, power and sex

The leak, in January, of the draft report into the activities of Jimmy Savile at the BBC was a reminder of the deeply political character of his activities.

The most obvious sense was that in which the right-wing gutter press sought to attach fault to the entire BBC for the activities of one man, on one branch of its programming, as if the entire organisation were complicit in Savile's acts of rape and child abuse.

Of course, others have tried to emphasise the connections between Savile and his friendship with Charles Windsor and the Royal Family. In a more narrowly political sense, he was very close to Margaret Thatcher (including staying for New Year at Chequers with her). Indeed, she actually fought to overcome the qualms of civil servants in the honours vetting system to secure Savile's knighthood. He had himself in the 1970s appeared in Tory Party election broadcasts, and affirmed that he was 'for the individual' (the individual in question always, obviously, being himself).

There are strong grounds to believe that he had co-offended with Peter Jaconelli, the oyster-guzzling (he held a world record) Tory Mayor of Scarborough. Some are trying to link this relationship to a wider network of powerful individuals. Campaigners demand to know why the police never caught the pair (and suspect their power and influence protected them, via police corruption).

These connections, though, do not get to the real political character of Savile's offending. We need to look at the whole of his life. Savile's father was a small-time crook in Leeds, associated with illicit gambling. Savile seems to have grown up

into this world. During the Second World War, he was called up as a 'Bevan Boy' to work in the mines, this left him free to remain in the UK, and apparently, engage in black market activities. After the war, he went into the scrap metal business (possibly with his father), and described himself as a 'company director', and he was clearly making a lot of money from scrap.

He soon moved into the night club business, and was an innovator for playing gramophone records at cheap entry afternoon dances. Now in his twenties, he was prolifically sexually active, with ready access to young girls and a sheen of glamour hung round him. Reportedly, he would share girls around with his friends, much like the activities we hear recently reported in Oldham and Rochdale. Clearly, he was the leader of the gang, and he could fix it for his friends to get laid, in an exercise in petty power.

He was a participant in the first Tour of Britain bicycle race, though it seems more for the self-promotion than for any sporting spirit. He soon transferred that self-promotion



Broadmoor

to the theatrical world of professional wrestling. He seems to have set great store by his personal fitness and prowess. He became established as a nightclub manager in Manchester, which doubtless expanded his underworld contacts, and taught him the value of cultivating good relations with the police.

The talent for self-promotion naturally led him into the media, where he found work on television and radio. It was a time when popular culture was rising, and he was part of the wave of 'outsiders' being absorbed into the established entertainment structures to give the BBC a 'common touch'. Throughout the 60s he was a minor celebrity within youth culture, working on Radio 1 and Top of the Pops.

It was in the 1970s that he rose to become a national institution, being the face of public safety adverts ("Clunk click") and eventually, the famous show, Jim'll Fixit, which seemed to chime with his role as a fixer more generally. At the heart of the show was the image of a powerful man, with connections, dispensing bounty, in return for nothing but adulation.

He cemented his fame by publicly proclaiming his faith in God, whom he referred to, significantly, as 'The Boss' in the book he published on his faith. He was at the front of good, clean, wholesome family values. This was when his charity work took off. He campaigned extensively for Stoke Mandeville hospital, and his bringing of charity to the NHS suited the ideology of the Conservative Party (today it could be called the 'Big Society'). Savile felt a certain proprietorial air towards the Hospital, and the Department of Health eventually

had to disabuse him of the notion that it was 'His' hospital, no matter how much money he had raised towards its renovation.

Further, he volunteered in Stoke Mandeville and Leeds General Infirmary. Incredibly (and apparently awed by his celebrity) the authorities at Stoke Mandeville handed over a flat for his use, and he was able to come and go in the Leeds Infirmary at will. Apparently, he would shower his fellow porters with gifts (like microwave ovens) as well as wowing them with his undoubted charm. Nursing staff were apparently aware that he was a 'sex pest' but apparently felt unable to deal with him, either through misplaced attitudes to such behaviour, or a feeling that he was too highly connected to senior management.

He seemed to find using institutions to be an effective means of abuse. He ingratiated himself with the management at a girls reform school, Duncroft (which he referred to as a 'posh borstal'), where he would take girls for a ride in his Rolls Royce, and would trade cigarettes for sex. In the 1980s, somehow, he was appointed to the board of Broadmoor hospital. He would hint darkly that he had connections with the powers that be that swung the appointment for him.

This was part of his methodology throughout, always implying that he had connections, not necessarily with a person's direct boss, but the very top. The only time he was interviewed by police, he used his charitable work as a shield (with the implicit threat to take away the gifts he had bestowed) and hinted that he had tame police officers

working on his side. He also hid behind the myth of the gold digger: that these women

were making these claims to try and make money out of him (if only it were so - imagine if all rich men had to actually choose between keeping their wealth, or never having sex again).

The only time in his abusive career he came a cropper was when he was pestering a girl on a P&O Ferry (one he received gratis from the owners of the firm). The ship's captain put him ashore: there is no higher authority at sea than a captain, and none of Savile's strategies could avail against him.

Once he had his knighthoods (one from the British Queen and one from the Pope) he used the apparent status as a shield. He was also notoriously litigious. In the 1990s he appeared on a Channel Four show in the *Without Walls* series, called the *Obituary Show*, in which he explained his love of libel actions, and suing the press for even hinting that he might be engaged in child sexual abuse.

This, then, is the political aspect of the Savile case: that he was a rich man. That he was a powerful man. That he lived in a hierarchical society, where people felt unable to challenge his aberrant behaviour, and where he could dispense gifts to buy people's loyalty. He was able to manipulate institutions, and find powerless people, who would be unlikely to be believed if they ever tried to tell the truth. He was unfailingly fawning to those he perceived to be more powerful than himself, and inveigled his way into their shadows to try and use a perceived closeness to his own ends.

We cannot say that in a society of common ownership there will not be sexual predators, abusers and psychopaths. The sheer number of humans and the spread of human behaviours mean there will always be the chance of such people cropping up. What we can say is that in a fiercely egalitarian society, where we recognise that we can only be as free as we help each other to be, people will have the courage to call their fellows to account. Where people don't fear the sack, fear the boss, just expect the powerful to behave in abuse ways, in such a society the likes of Savile will be much less likely to prosper.

Where there are no bosses (real or imagined) and people feel that the levers of practical power lie in their own hands, his tactics would not work. Where there is no personal wealth to give out (either in petty gifts or as 'charity') there will be no need to fawn, and no way that one man can threaten to take his ball away and wreak destruction upon society.

Of course, because Savile worked on his apparent political connections, people will remain paranoid that there is a secret nest of abusers at the heart of our society: that is the reflection of our powerlessness, and based on the real truth that they gain power from secrecy and unaccountability. The fact that other alleged abusers, such as Cyril Smith and Greville Janner, also used their access to institutions to gratify their lust for power shows not that there is necessarily a secret cabal at the heart of things, but that there is a systematic possibility of this fed by the way society is organised.

As such, we need to free ourselves from the Savile society.

PIK SMEET

Hosting Top of the Pops, 1964



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Take a tip from me?

You tip the waiter but not the cleaner, the taxi driver but not the bus driver. Should you tip in a restaurant but not in a pub? Social customs, like tipping, differ from country to country, from situation to situation and change over time. Here, Ian Parkin explores the origins of tipping, its geographical and social nuances, and suggests its subservient nature is an anachronism.

It has filled the pages of countless tourist guides and been a topic of social etiquette for centuries. To tip or not to tip: how much to tip and who to tip? Recent news reports of high street companies regarding tips as profit have made the issue even more divisive.

Whenever I go to a restaurant, whether it is with friends, family or loved ones, we always end up disagreeing about tipping.

I recently booked a table at a restaurant and arriving early was shown to the bar. The barman serving offered, or should I say, persuaded me to add the cost of the drinks to my table bill. I wondered why since I was offering cash. The penny dropped when the bill arrived: it was a great deal more once taxes and gratuities were added.

There is the legal, government-imposed 20 percent Value Added Tax and a 12 percent service charge, which, I appreciate, is not obligatory. You can ask for it to be removed but must suffer the social embarrassment that this request involves. But the expenditure does not stop there.

The attending staff ask: 'Was everything okay for you with your meal and the service?' Which very much feels like a strong hint for: 'Don't forget my tip?' When this is all added up, 12 percent service, a customary tip of at least 10 percent along with the 20 percent VAT: my bill has rocketed by a whopping 42 percent – almost half the total price.

On another occasion, when making a reservation at a different restaurant, I was informed that the restaurant levies a 10 percent music charge for the entertainment provided. In small print at the bottom of their menu it also states that a 12 percent service charge would be added to the final bill, and, true to form, the staff were still angling for their tip.

Furthermore, I am given to understand that 10 percent is increasingly being considered as a derisory gratuity. In the USA between 15 percent and 20 percent is now the threshold of social acceptability, if you don't want to be branded a 'Canadian' (the insulting term for a mean tipper).

So, to tip or not to tip then, that is the question. It confronts us in so many social situations these days. But, before I attempt to offer an opinion on the subject, there are a number of factors to consider; not least the historical origins, the cultural, social and economic traditions and, not to forget, the political ramifications.

It is generally believed that the custom of tipping began in the taverns of England in the 17th century. Patrons would offer their waiter or server some money, 'To Insure Prompt Service', making the acronym a 'tip'. The practice seems to have quickly caught on and soon spread among the taverns, pubs and restaurants of the time.

Similarly, guests who stayed in private homes around this time would pay monies to the servants as a gift; these gifts were known as 'vails'. However the practice of vails predates tipping and as far back as the 16th century and earlier, during feudal times, lords and ladies who travelled the dirt roads of England would give a coin to longbowmen to ensure their safety of passage.

One popular misconception is that tipping started in the USA since they are the society that promotes and champions tipping more than any other. In fact, until the early 20th century, Americans viewed tipping as inconsistent with the values of an egalitarian, democratic society and at variance with the principles of the Founding Fathers.

The US, unlike Europe, had no aristocratic tradition but was founded on the constitutional principle that 'all men

are born equal'. The aftermath of the Civil War saw wealthy Americans beginning to travel to Europe in significant numbers, and returning home to the States they brought the tip tradition with them to demonstrate their status and sophistication as well-heeled and well-travelled.

And, as tipping spread, like 'evil insects and weeds' according to a *New York Times* report in 1897, many thought it was incompatible with America's democratic ideals. 'Tipping, and the aristocratic idea it exemplifies,' commentators said, 'is what we left Europe to escape.'

Opposition to tipping was not limited to the media and, in 1904; the Anti-Tipping Society of America sprang up in Georgia. 100,000 members signed pledges not to tip anyone for a year. Leagues of travelling salesmen opposed the tip, as did most labour unions. In 1909 Washington became the first of six states to pass an anti-tipping law.

William Scott wrote a stinging diatribe against the practice in his book, *The Itching Palm*. In it he condemns the policy of paying for a service twice – 'once to the employer and again to the employee'. He criticises tipping as 'democracy's mortal foe' that creates 'a servile attitude for a fee'.

'In the American democracy,' Scott cautioned, 'to be servile is incompatible with citizenship'. 'Every tip given in the United States is a blow at our experiment in democracy. The custom announces to the world... that we do not believe practically that 'all men are created equal'. Unless a waiter can be a gentleman, democracy is a failure. If any form of service is menial, democracy is a failure. Those Americans who dislike self-respect in servants are undesirable citizens; they belong in an aristocracy.'

Scott continues: 'If tipping is un-American, some day, somehow, it will be uprooted like African slavery.'

One periodical of the same era deplored tipping for creating a class of workers who relied on 'fawning for favors'.

But hostility to tipping was not limited to those previously mentioned. Some proprietors also regarded tips as equivalent to bribing an employee to do something that was otherwise forbidden, such as tipping a waiter to get a larger portion of food.

And more broadly in society, tips, gratuities and gifts were viewed pejoratively; to curry favour, secure a contract, to win a bid or gain an unfair advantage.

Despite this opposition, while diners and servers alike haven't stopped grumbling since about the system of tipping, there was no serious legislative effort to end the practice.

Prohibition, when introduced in 1919, made the sale of alcohol illegal and had a huge impact on hotels and restaurants which lost a major revenue stream. The resulting financial pressure converted proprietors to welcome tipping as a way of supplementing employee wages. Contrary to popular belief, tipping did not necessarily arise because of servers' low wages – the waiter profession was relatively well paid in the era when tipping became institutionalised. And tipping persisted.

The new laws rarely were enforced, and when they were, they did not hold up in court. By 1926, every anti-tipping law had been repealed.

Ultimately, even those who, in principle opposed the practice found themselves unable to stiff their servers. Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labour and a leading figure of the anti-tipping movement, admitted that he 'followed the usual custom of giving tips'.

In Britain after the Second World War, the period became known as the post-war consensus (1945 -1979) during which time both the Conservative and the Labour shared common ground on policy.

Nationalised Industries such as the then General Post

Office (GPO) strongly discouraged their staff from accepting gratuities and local authority workers such as refuse collection had 'no gratuities' marked on their vehicles.

The process of tipping itself is whimsical and ambiguous. The people that tip tend to have golden rules about who to tip that, in fact, do not stand up to scrutiny when analysed. People tip when travelling. They tend to tip taxicab drivers, who are in fact self-employed, but they do not tip a bus driver, a train driver or an airline pilot.

People who tip when dining, tip a waiter or waitress in a restaurant but not in a café, coffee shop or an airline steward. Furthermore, they do not leave tips for the kitchen or cleaning staff that contributed towards them enjoying their evening.

Tipping is therefore both capricious and illogical and engenders a 'doff the cap' mentality. However, on a positive note, it does afford the individual the opportunity to express their appreciation for a job well done. But it should of course be the norm that a job is well done and not the exception.

Tipping is an anomaly and not all tips get to be kept by the intended recipient. When a tip is included in a credit card payment, there is no guarantee that the person it was intended for will receive it and furthermore they have no right to it.

Many establishments operate a 'Tronc system' under which all tips are collected by the Troncmaster, the monies are then pooled and shared between all employees, both front of house and back room staff.

Different countries across the world have very different attitudes to tipping. Throughout Europe tipping is not expected, although the bill is often rounded up or some small change left, as in Spain. In France tipping is not expected but a service charge is added to the bill. In China, Hong Kong and Singapore it is not expected except in certain situations.

I am reliably informed that New Zealand once displayed a sign in their airport arrivals lounge to the effect that: 'Our people are paid good wages and there is no need for tipping'. And in Japan I understand that tipping is rarely seen and any direct offer of money is viewed as rude.

In Britain there is a legal minimum wage in place to ensure that people do not rely on the 'grace and favour' of a no-wage or low-wage economy, where tips are often used to make up wages.

Tom Bishop, head of travel insurance at Direct Line said: 'Our laws prevent restaurants in Britain from using tips to up salaries, meaning that there is not an established tipping culture in the UK.'

It can be argued that we should not support tipping but strive for increases to minimum wages and to lessen the disparity of wealth. Furthermore, it is difficult to support Fay Maschler's idea of a legally-enforced service charge (*Evening Standard* 28 August 2015). Restaurants should pay their staff realistic, living wages. Whether a tip or service charge is expected or legally imposed to supplement low wages; it is in fact exploitation of both staff and customers.

Tipping is an anachronism that finds its roots in class-based society and encourages staff to be subservient. All the time that we find ourselves living in the money-orientated, capitalist system we should reject the notion of tipping and gratuities in favour of increased wages and a more egalitarian society.

The realisation of a socialist system would of course render the whole process of capitalism as a social economic system redundant – and tipping with it.

IAN PARKIN

Down Mexico Way



Mexican migrants sleeping by a railway

BILLIONAIRE PRESIDENTIAL hopeful, Donald Trump, has pledged that, if he becomes President of the United States, he will build a 3,145 kilometres-long wall or fence between the US and Mexico, to keep out all Mexicans and other Latin-Americans.

Between 1965 and 2015 more than 16 million Mexicans migrated, legally or illegally, to the US. Between 2009 and 2014 870,000 came, according to the Pew Research Center. About 5.7 million are currently living in the country illegally, but they do not come, or attempt to come, just from Mexico. They are from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. They attempt to reach America via Mexico. 'It is like a fever. People are desperate,' says one Honduran by telephone to the *Toronto*

Star (30 January).

From 1 October, 2014 to 30 September, 2015 134,000 central Americans, many of them unaccompanied children, fled north, only to be arrested by the American authorities. Many of them don't get that far. They are apprehended, or even killed before they reach the United States border, either by the police or by narco-gangs. Approximately 153,000 Guatemalans, Hondurans and Salvadorans were deported back south in 2015 alone. A few attempt to return north again almost immediately despite the risks.

As in Europe and the Middle East, there are always smuggler gangs offering up to three attempts to get would-be migrants into the US. The costs range from between \$5,000 and \$10,000. More and more of the migrants, even they succeed in getting into the United States, are being caught and deported.

Why do they try? Why are they so desperate?

Most are peasants, owning little or no land or propertyless workers, often unemployed and desperately poor. Then there is the gang, drug-related violence. San Pedro Sula in Honduras is said to be the world's second-most violent, non-warzone city, followed by San Salvador. Many murders are gang-related; few are prosecuted. Parents are afraid to let their children play in the streets. And in the US?

Migration to America, however, is not all one way. Between 2009 and 2014 more Mexicans left the US than migrated into the country – probably up to one million. The grass in America, it would seem, was no greener than it was south of the border. Capitalism is everywhere.

PETER E. NEWELL

STOP VOTING TO KEEP CAPITALISM GOING

The Socialist Party is contesting 3 of the 14 constituencies in the Greater London Assembly elections on 5 May. Here is our election leaflet.

Socialism isn't about paying benefits, taxing the rich or nationalising industries.

It is wanting us all to be free and equals running things for our own benefit.

Democracy should mean all have an equal say in running things. But today we don't all benefit equally. We are running society on behalf of the people who own it.

In our workplaces, we co-operate and produce wealth together. Everyone's work is equally needed. But we don't benefit equally. The people who really benefit, are those who own the world.

We cannot be free while we work for them and not ourselves.

Real freedom comes from power. Today real power comes from owning wealth. So long as a minority own the wealth, they will have the power and the freedom, we won't.

The glorified talking shop of the Greater London Assembly is just about managing the costs of keeping inequality going. The SOCIALIST PARTY wants wealth and power owned and controlled by everyone.

We are seeking a stop to electing people who redistribute poverty and run the world for the rich.

When a majority of us stand firm and demand that the wealth of the world is brought into common and democratic ownership we will be able to peacefully make the change.

When that happens, we will be freed from bosses, loan sharks and landlords. We will be able to produce wealth to supply the needs for all.

We will be able to work less because we won't be wasting our time protecting the privilege of a few. We would no longer need money, buying or selling. We could share the wealth we make among ourselves

rationally.

To start to make that change, vote for the SOCIALIST PARTY candidate to let people know, and then come join us. The more people who do that, the sooner we can change the world.

The SOCIALIST PARTY candidates are:
Lambeth & Southwark: Kevin PARKIN
North East (Islington, Hackney, Waltham Forest): Bill MARTIN
South West (Hounslow, Kingston, Richmond): Adam BUICK

The campaigns are being conducted by locally by the branches. Offers to help out with leafleting and street stalls should go, respectively, to Head Office, North London and West London branches (see page 8 for contact details).

Confirmation bias

A new series of articles about rational thinking - and how to do it better



*Seeking out contradictions: Charles Darwin,
by G Richmond*

“I had also, during many years, followed a golden rule, namely, that whenever a published fact, a new observation or thought came across me, which was opposed to my general results, to make a memorandum of it without fail and at once; for I had found by experience that such facts and thoughts were far more apt to escape from the memory than favourable ones. Owing to this habit, very few objections were raised against my views which I had not at least noticed and attempted to answer” (Charles Darwin).

In order to be able to effectively evaluate arguments and points of view it is necessary not only to have a good knowledge of logic and logical fallacies but also to have an insight into the psychological processes that contribute to the formation of our beliefs. We all tend to greatly underestimate our own capacity for self-deception. The desire is to see ourselves as fully rational beings but to do so is an act of self-deception. As experimental psychologists have found, we all are subject to cognitive biases and have the capacity to rationalise completely false beliefs. By ‘cognitive bias’ we mean a frequently observed tendency to error that people make in the judgment of information. Some of these effects are caused by mental shortcuts used when making decisions

or judgments, these are called ‘heuristics’. Some are the result of motivation, part of an unconscious process in which our brains try to gel all our wants, desires and beliefs into a coherent whole. Over the last few decades a long list of these biases and heuristics has been catalogued.

As Darwin noted, unconsciously or not, we all have a tendency to look for evidence that supports what we already believe and ignore or forget that which does not. This is called the **confirmation bias** and it is perhaps the most important to know of all the cognitive biases. For example, take the supposed link between a full moon and dramatic changes in human behaviour. Despite there being no significant statistical evidence supporting the claim, the idea still persists in the popular imagination. People remember and recall all the instances that seemingly support the notion and disregard or forget the many more instances that do not. Cases of non-events do not stick as well in the memory. Or consider the results a scientific study. If the conclusion of the study supports a belief that we already hold dear we accept it as a good, solid study. If the conclusion of the study contradicts our cherished belief, we are going to look much more carefully for potential flaws and try to find some way to dismiss it, we may even be less likely to recall it in the future.

Let’s try an experiment. Take the numbers 4, 8, 16 and 32. Try and guess the rule that was used to make the preceding sequence. Now write a sequence of different numbers that you could use to test your theory. Write a second sequence that again could be used to test the theory. Chances are you have just written two sets of doubling numbers. If you have, this is a demonstration of **congruence bias**, something that can lead to confirmation bias, it is the tendency to test our own theories but not to also test alternative theories. The actual rule was simply that each number be greater than the one preceding it. To test that a theory is true we have to seek to disconfirm it, the mistake was to come up with a hypothesis and then repeatedly look for cases that confirm it rather than testing it against other competing possibilities. Unchecked, this tendency can lead people to firmly hold conclusions that may have no statistical basis in reality.

The tendency towards confirmation bias is an inescapable part of being human. It is so engrained that it was not until the methods of science were fully developed that we had a tool to help counter it. To try to avoid bias in our lives we should take a hint from Darwin and deliberately seek out and take note of what appears to contradict our current beliefs.

DJP

“I’ve been teaching for 30 years, and I find this to be one of the best short films I have ever used” **DOUG BROWN, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, NORTH ARIZONA UNIVERSITY**

Capitalism and Other Kids’ Stuff is a short film from The Socialist Party which questions some of the most basic assumptions about life in capitalism.

For a copy, complete the order form on page 7



W O N E TALKS



Summer School

22nd - 24th July 2016

Fircroft College, Birmingham

Money flows through every aspect of society, and therefore affects every aspect of our lives. What possessions we have, the efficiency of the services we use, and how we are supposed to value ourselves are all shaped by the money system.

We're encouraged to think of the economy in much the same way as we think about the weather – something changeable, but always there. When the climate is 'good', life feels brighter. When the climate is 'bad', we huddle down until we can ride out the storm. Although we'll always have the weather, the economy

doesn't have to be permanent.

Our weekend of talks and discussion looks at the role of money in our society. In what ways does money affect how we think and behave? How does the economy really function? How did money come to be such a dominant force? We also look forward to a moneyless socialist society, which will be – in more than one sense of the word – free.

Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £100. The concessionary rate is £50. Day visitors are welcome, but please book in advance.

To book a place, send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to Summer School, Sutton Farm, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, York, YO51 9ER, or book online through the QR code or at <http://spgb.net/summerschool2016>. E-mail enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk



McDonnell's mantra

LABOUR SHADOW Chancellor John McDonnell is apparently going around repeating the mantra 'Investment, investment, investment' as the solution to the woes of British capitalism. Labour activist Michael Burke wrote justifying this in Ken Livingstone's online *Socialist Economic Bulletin* on 25 February.

He started off well enough:

'... contrary to George Osborne (and those on the left who are confused and echo him) it is not possible for consumption, or wages to lead economy recovery.'

This is very true. What drives capitalism is not satisfying consumption, not even paying consumption, but investing capital with a view to profit. Only an increase in such investment can lead capitalism out of a slump. Burke is criticising here a wide section of the left, including the TUC which a year ago last October organised a march on the theme of 'Britain Needs A Pay Rise' arguing that 'getting money into people's pockets is essential to securing a strong economy.'

Burke's argument is that the current problem of British capitalism (for that is his concern) is a fall and stagnation in productivity. This, as output per hour

worked, is measured by an index of total national output divided by an index of total hours worked.

Normally it goes slowly up as output increases faster than hours worked due to workers producing more in the same period of time. But it can also go down. An obvious reason for this would be if output increases less than hours worked.

There are other reasons why productivity might fall, to do with the way it is calculated, which Burke mentions, such as 'the changing composition of output, with the decline of relatively high productivity sectors and the increase of low productivity ones.' He rejects these as an explanation of the current 'productivity problem' of British capitalism, arguing that it is due to output not having risen fast enough. Others attribute it to hours worked not falling enough as employers were not ruthless enough in sacking workers during the slump, preferring to hang on to them while waiting for the recovery.

Output has been rising recently but, Burke argues, not fast enough to increase productivity because productive capacity (i.e. the capacity to produce output) has fallen. He understands capitalism enough to realise why this happens:

'... all capitalist economies are determined by the realisation of profit ... Profit is the *raison d'être*. As a result, if profits are declining, or by scrapping unprofitable plant or machinery profits will increase, it is quite usual for productive capacity to be scrapped.'

He notes that this has been happening:

'In the UK productive capacity is being scrapped. This is not because there is no unsatisfied demand in the UK economy. On the contrary, there is both a scarcity of necessities, such as housing and healthcare and other areas, as well as a large trade deficit. The productive capacity is being scrapped because its owners cannot make profits, or do not anticipate sufficient profits in a situation of growing competition and sluggish growth in consumption ...'

Again, true enough. But he thinks this can be remedied by the state investing to increase productive capacity leading to an increase in output, so getting productivity to go on rising again.

That's the theory but (quite apart from where the state is going to get the money to invest) there's a flaw. If private capitalist firms are not investing because they 'do not anticipate sufficient profits in a situation of growing competition', the state investing in their place won't change this. The investment would still be unprofitable and so be no more sustainable than the increase in consumption he criticises others on the left for advocating. It is only profitable investment that can lead the capitalist economy out of a slump, and profits are not something that the state can conjure up.



Whatever Happened To Political Drama?

THE PHRASE 'cops 'n' frocks' has been used to sum up the current state of British TV drama, with its lazy reliance on crime (*Happy Valley*, *Silent Witness* etc.) and the past (*Call The Midwife*, *Downton Abbey*). The range of dramas has narrowed considerably from previous decades, and the idea of televised drama being used to voice radical political ideas or critique social trends is sadly now more old-fashioned than a cathode ray tube.

From the 1960s, many plays found their homes in anthology series, a format which is as obsolete as political drama itself. *Theatre 625* (1964 – 1968) featured dramatisations of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* and works by George Orwell, August Strindberg and Franz Kafka. More widely remembered are *The Wednesday Play* (1964 – 1970) and its successor, *Play For Today* (1970 – 1984). Their emphasis was on original screenplays rather than adaptations, and therefore they concentrated on more immediate issues which otherwise might not have received much public attention. Around 600 plays were produced in these three BBC series, many of which were lost when their tapes were wiped in the belief that they had exhausted their economic potential. Notable productions include two plays about homelessness written by Jeremy Sandford, who slept rough as part of his research: *Cathy Come Home* (1966) showed a young family's downward spiral into homelessness, while *Edna The Inebriate Woman* (1971) followed a woman's life on the streets and in hostels, prison and a psychiatric hospital. *The Spongers* (1978) showed the devastating effects of welfare cuts on services for disabled people. *The Black Stuff* (1980) by Alan Bleasdale told the story of five Liverpool tarmac layers whose struggles with unemployment were subsequently described in its sequel series *The Boys From The Blackstuff* (1982).

As well as Bleasdale and Sandford, other prominent film-makers included director Ken Loach, producer Tony Garnett and writer Jim Allen. Outside the anthology strands, Loach worked with them on *The Rank And File* (1971), based on the Pilkington Glass strike which took place in a climate of trade union leaders being seen as too close to a government proposing laws against unofficial strikes, *Days Of Hope* (1975), which followed a family in the years after the First World War, and *The Price Of Coal* (1977) about a Yorkshire colliery community.

These plays are remembered as being 'gritty', focusing on hardship and aiming for realism by being filmed as if they were documentaries. However, the anthology format allowed for differing styles and messages, and even Ken Loach made an offbeat musical for *The Wednesday Play*. Other BBC series were thought experiments offering 'what if...' scenarios about possible drastic changes to society. *Doomwatch* (1970 – 1972) was set in a fictional government department which investigated threats from scientific developments, such as genetic engineering and behaviour modification. Distrust of the notion of scientific progress runs through *Doomwatch* like words in a stick of rock. 'Progress' has connotations of continual improvements, but

science exists in a changing political and social context which shapes how it develops. In this series, politicians and scientists are depicted as secretive, self-serving and blinkered, suppressing awareness of unwanted side effects to further their own interests. *Survivors* (1975 – 1977) used the starting point of a pandemic wiping out most of the population to explore themes of replacing capitalist institutions, communal living and self-sufficiency. These dramas are less overtly political,

perhaps because they aren't based in real situations. The scenario described in nuclear war dramas *The War Game* (1965) and *Threads* (1984) fortunately hasn't happened either, although these plays clearly criticised real-life government policies about preparing for and supposedly coping with armageddon.

Even children's programmes occasionally tackled serious matters without talking down to their audience. *Noah's Castle* (1980) was set in a near future where rocketing inflation leads to scarcity of basic commodities. The school-based *Grange Hill* (1978 – 2008) examined issues such as drug addiction and bullying as well as criticising the effects of funding cuts to education.

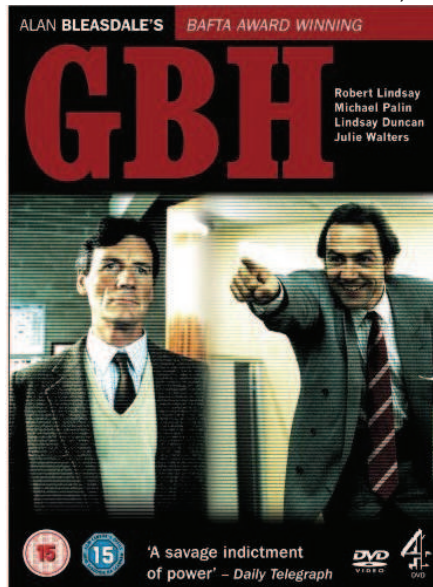
By the mid-'80s, *Grange Hill* became less vocal about government education policies and *Play For Today* had had its day. Television drama was no longer a place to consciously voice political ideas, and instead the emphasis shifted to discussing more personal issues through soap operas such as *EastEnders* and *Brookside*. Soaps are more about juggling characters' relationships than ideas, so the format doesn't lend itself to exploring the impact of political and economic forces.

The mid-'90s saw the final flowering of political TV drama. By this time, the documentary style of previous decades was going out of fashion, although the sense of anger remained. *Cardiac*

Arrest (1994 – 1996) was a serial based on the experiences of writer Jed Mercurio when he worked in hospital. He describes a health service where staff have to rely on cynicism and cutting corners to cope with the hierarchies and impossible workloads. *Our Friends In The North* (1996) was Peter Flannery's 'state of the nation' play, spanning thirty years in the lives of four people shaped by changing housing policy, police corruption and the miners' strike. The plot of Alan Bleasdale's *GBH* (1992) echoed events in the early '80s when Militant influenced the Labour Party and Liverpool city council. The other political dramas of the 1990s also had their roots in previous decades; Tony Garnett was an executive producer of *Cardiac Arrest*, and attempts to bring *Our Friends In The North* to the screen began since it was performed as a stage play in 1982.

All these plays passionately examine how people with little power or influence react to wider economic and political forces. They tend to be from a left-wing, rather than a revolutionary viewpoint, but still present experiences and situations from which we can draw our own conclusions. Why is television no longer an outlet for this kind of expression? These days, the BBC doesn't want to alienate the government in case this leads to further funding cuts. It places more weight than it used to on its supposed 'impartiality'. Any programme which presents a different viewpoint to acceptance of the status quo would be seen as 'partial', and therefore would not be produced. Even documentaries which expose injustices and corruption presuppose that the basic set-up of society is sound. This doesn't mean that successors of Loach, Garnett, Allen and the others are clamouring to make political dramas and getting knocked back by conservative TV executives. What few successors they have probably realise that it's not even worth trying.

MIKE FOSTER



Nobody Governs?

**Anthony King: *Who Governs Britain?*
Penguin £8.99.**



It's a good question, and King surveys twelve possible answers, from voters and party members to MPs and the media. One theme of the book is that the 'classic' form of post-war government,

which lasted till the 1970s, no longer holds. The political power of special advisers has increased; fewer politicians now have extensive experience of working outside politics; ministers are expected to be more pro-active, and civil servants no longer provide them with knowledgeable critiques of government policy; parliamentary select committees are more independent-minded than previously, and the judiciary plays a larger role than it used to. But one wonders what effect all this has on the majority of the population.

King makes the important point that the UK is not remotely a sovereign state, one possessing supreme power over its own affairs. It is subject to many international organisations, most obviously the EU, but also the UN, NATO, G7, IMF, World Health Organisation and so on. Multinational companies are extremely powerful too. More generally, the UK is affected by impersonal market forces (i.e. the ups and downs of world capitalism). Quite apart from the current recession, there was the massive loan from the IMF in 1976, forced on the government after foreign-exchange reserves drained away. Back in 1931, during the Great Depression, a 'National' government was formed after overseas investors lost confidence in the minority Labour government.

An interesting chapter deals with the media, who report on nearly everything except their own relations with ministers and party leaders. Radio and TV are legally required to be impartial (!), but no such restrictions apply to the press. Rupert Murdoch exercised enormous influence over Tony Blair, and was described as sometimes more powerful than the Prime Minister. Many politicians are cowed by fear of having the media ridicule them or delve into their private life.

One chapter covers 'interests', people or groups with some cause in

common. Thatcher greatly disliked vested interests (well, some of them, anyway), and trade unions are no longer anywhere near as influential as they once were. Some interests are not officially organised as such, and there is a brief reference to 'the well off', described as 'the dominant interest', with no real competitors. But there is absolutely no recognition of the power of the one percent, and how government policies defend them. Murdoch's influence on politicians derives from his media power, but his reason for exerting it the way he does is due to his position as a capitalist.

King's final answer to his question is that 'no one institution and certainly no one individual' governs Britain. He sets out a rather feeble proposal for a 'Nordic style' system, where parties try to accommodate their disagreements. But this will make no substantial difference, for it is capitalism and the capitalist class that rule, something most academic observers of politics fail to spot.

PB

Funny Peculiar

**Danny Katch. *Socialism . . . Seriously.*
Chicago. Haymarket Books. 2015.**



Katch has produced what is in many ways an engaging attempt to introduce socialist and anti-capitalist ideas to people who are curious or just vaguely interested. It is a humorous,

well-written and produced pocket-sized book that may well serve at least part of its purpose. But there are some flaws – and big ones.

Katch is a member of the British SWP's sister party in the US and the book is hampered by the type of ideological baggage implied by this. In particular, it fetishises the past from a Leninist point of view and romanticises 'workers' struggles' in the way followers of Lenin and Trotsky are wont to do. This is the case with more recent rebellions like the 'Arab Spring' but is more seriously so with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 – an iconic event for the Trotskyist left which defines their very existence but which hobbles their ability to both engage with other workers and develop a

revolutionary strategy which doesn't appear archaic.

Katch does his best to attempt this, but fails miserably. He fetishises workers' councils (soviets) as the ultimate form of democratic expression for the working class without ever explaining why these arose in Russia and other countries in the first place (backward political development and lack of maturity of bourgeois political democracy). He also – as is the case with most Trotskyists – conveniently forgets to mention that it was the Bolsheviks who smashed the workers' councils in Russia when they were no longer convenient and did not submit to the iron will of Lenin and his followers. Furthermore, any idea that countries like the US or the UK will in the 21st century spontaneously create soviets as a means of bringing about a socialist revolution sounds fantastical and other-worldly, as indeed it is.

The conception advanced of what socialism is also tends to be confused. There is no clear and consistent sense that it involves the creation of relationships that have rendered the defining categories of capitalism obsolete – ie working for wages, the accumulation of capital out of profits, the production of goods for sale on a market and distribution of goods via prices and money. It usually sounds instead like some sort of hi-tech state-run capitalism planned and administered by workers' councils and where racism, sexism, etc have disappeared. There is a chapter called 'Imagine' where Katch comes nearer to describing a socialist society than most Trotskyists do but he still hedges his bets here, no doubt lest he sound too 'utopian'.

There is also a slightly odd chapter towards the end on religion where you get the distinct impression he wants to say what socialists think – that religion is a diversion from solving society's problems and involves beliefs that are not tenable or capable of standing up to scientific enquiry. Yet he clearly doesn't want to upset the followers of Islam the SWP have been trying to cosy up to for years (on the usual Trotskyist grounds that they think an enemy of an enemy must be a friend). So again he pulls his punches.

All in all, another missed opportunity from a Trotskyist writer probably capable of better.

DAP

No Room for Dissent

Marxist World Issue 1 – Spring 2016. £3.50 inc. P&P from <http://marxistworld.net/journal/buy-the-journal>



This is the first issue journal of the small split from the Trotskyist so-called 'Socialist Party of England and Wales' (known as SPEW and not part of the World Socialist Movement) ostensibly over the causes of economic crisis. The journal carries articles on the character of China's economy, experiences in the Labour Party, Marx's *Capital*, Bernie Sanders, a reprint of an article by Peter Taaffe, 'The Greek Road to Socialism', Electronic Voting in the Trade Unions and a book review.

Marxist World claims SPEW hold an underconsumptionist view of economic crisis; that there is not enough purchasing power to buy back commodities produced, whereas they claim the 'tendency of the rate of profit to fall' since the 1970s has caused the

current economic crisis. This did not sit well with SPEW leader Peter Taaffe, and after some debate two critics were 'indefinitely suspended' and eleven ended up leaving.

The Labour Party account included here is one of left-wing Labour members' disagreements with right-wing Labour members (business as usual in the Labour Party) and the left-wing author concludes by seeming happy to remain on this merry-go-round. The Peter Taaffe reprint argues the old Communist Party was reformist, *Marxist World* use this to argue SPEW are reformist. The Bernie Sanders article is a good exposé of Sanders, but boils down the problem to the wrong leader, never considering that leaders are unnecessary if not harmful.

In fact this goes to the heart of the problem of *Marxist World*, who welcome only activists adhering to general ideas of 'Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky'. They claim willingness to 'join any revolutionary organisation' that 'guarantees genuine democratic centralist rights and faction rights based on open discussion.' But where has 'democratic centralism' ever allowed factions for long? Where has 'democratic centralism' allowed challenging

incumbent leaderships? Where has 'democratic centralism' allowed public dissent?

Trotsky answered at a Bolshevik party congress in 1924 'Comrades, none of us wants to be or can be right against the party. In the last analysis, the party is always right, because the party is the sole historical instrument that the working class possesses for the solution of its fundamental tasks. I have already said that nothing would be simpler than to say before the party that all these criticisms, all these declarations, warnings, and protests – all were mistaken from beginning to end. I cannot say so, however, comrades, because I do not think it. I know that no one can be right against the party. It is only possible to be right with the party and through it since history has not created any other way to determine the correct position.' And 'We can only be right with and by the Party, for history has provided no other way of being in the right'.

The lesson here we should conclude is: don't swap leaders, especially not living ones for dead ones.

DJW

Exhibition Review

Grafters

The People's History Museum, Manchester

The development of photography followed hard on the heels of the Industrial Revolution, but depicting workers and industry was not a simple matter. These and related issues are



John Bulmer: Mill girls, Elland, near Halifax (1960)

pursued in an exhibition at the People's History Museum in Manchester which runs until August.

Some of the earliest photos of working people were taken in studios so they

could be collected by the comfortably off, but the subjects in these probably did not see the developed portraits. Other workers encountered cameras at the hands of the police who, from 1865, took photos of convicts with their crimes listed (frequently larceny and sleeping rough).

From the 1870s onwards, workers were often included in photos of factories, in order to emphasise the size of the machines they were working on. Photos of groups of workers, which had originated in group photos of soldiers, became common from the 1880s, and were especially popular in the First World War, to show the women workers who had taken over while the men were off fighting. As cameras became cheaper, workers were able to document their own lives and surroundings. In the 'Soviet Union', photos were intended to make workers look heroic, and something along similar lines happened in the West during the Second World War.

There are many excellent photos here, over a range of dates, for instance of pit brow lasses in Wigan from 1865, of the massive labour involved in constructing



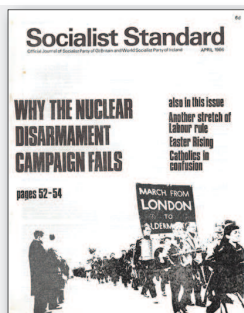
19th Century Police mug-shot

the Manchester Ship Canal, and of a depressing smoke-enveloped Bradford from the 1940s. The last Lancashire miners are depicted in 1989, as is the last shift at a deep mine, from Kellingley in Yorkshire in 2015. There is even one of a football match between the police and official miners' pickets, from 1985 in Derby. Many of the recent photos were taken by the exhibition's

curator, Ian Beesley.

It's a stimulating display, showing how even something as apparently unproblematic as photographing members of the working class reveals underlying issues and power relationships.

PB



50 Years Ago

Eight years of CND

ALWAYS, THERE are groups in protest against some aspect or other of this social system. CND'ers come into this category. They leave

intact the very thing which spawned nuclear reapons – the private property basis of Capitalism – so their cause is hopeless.

Supposing the Bomb could be banned. If two Nations, possessing the necessary technical knowledge, should quarrel seriously enough over the things wars are really fought for – markets, sources of raw materials, strategic Bases, etc. – and even supposing they commenced fighting with 'conventional,' 'moral' weapons, would not the losing side set its scientists to producing nuclear weapons in order to stave off defeat? If history is anything to go by, the side which was *winning* would use the Bomb and justify this by claiming it had brought hostilities to a speedier

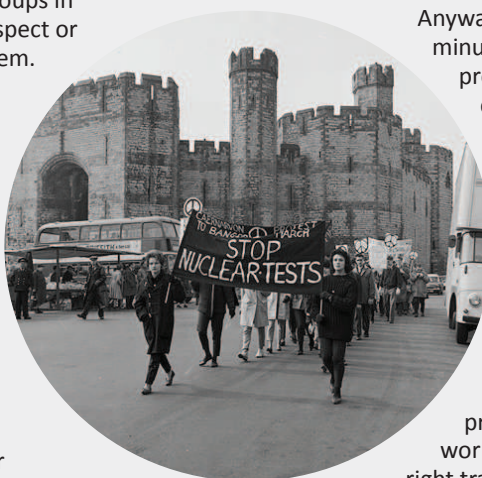
conclusion.

It would require several volumes to deal with every 'solution' which CND'ers have dreamt-up over the years. From World Government or alignment with the 'uncommitted Nations' (some strange bedfellows in this lot), to 'disengagement' and the farcical 'Steps Towards Peace,' every straw has been clutched at.

Anyway, even if it were possible, Capitalism minus the Bomb would not solve the problem of war; a world based on the common ownership of the means of wealth production, alone, will do that. So, being after something fundamentally different, we have no alternative but to oppose CND.

One final point. We do not deny the sincerity of many campaigners; the energy and ingenuity they displayed in tackling a job they considered important provided further proof that once working men and women get on the right track Capitalism's days are numbered.

(from article by V.V., *Socialist Standard*, April 1966)



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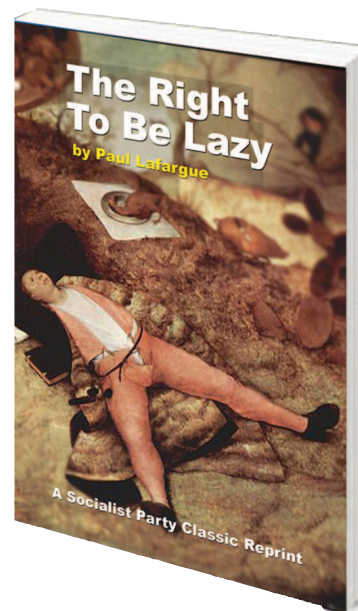
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Socialist Party Publications

The Right to be Lazy

By Paul Lafargue



A reprint of Marx's son-in-law's classic text. Makes the clear point that any imaginary right to work under capitalism is just a wage slave's 'right' to be exploited.

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SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2015

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Folkestone area Discussion Group

If there is anyone interested in the formation of a Discussion Group in the Folkestone area, contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org or phone: 07971 715569

Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our Meetup site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

Clapham

Sunday **3 April**, 3.00 p.m.

Leftovers: An illustrated tour of the remains of East Germany

Speaker: Keith Scholey

The Socialist Party's premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.

Chiswick

Tuesday **5 April**, 8.00 pm

Does it matter who's the Mayor of London?

Committee Room (upstairs), Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN.

Euston

Thursday **14 April**, 8.00 p.m.

London elections: why bother voting?

Venue: Function Room (upstairs), Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, Somers Town, London, NW1 1HB

Facilitated by Bill Martin.

Chiswick

Tuesday **19 April**, 8.00 p.m.

What do we say on the Euroreferendum?
Committee Room (upstairs), Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN.

Clapham

Sunday, **24 April**, 3.00 p.m.

THE 1916 DUBLIN EASTER RISING

A talk by guest speaker Dr Ivan Gibbons, Programme Director in Irish Studies at St Mary's University, Twickenham and a Director of Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre

The Socialist Party's premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.

CANTERBURY

Saturday **16 April**, from 12.00 Noon

Canterbury Street Stall

In the Parade pedestrian precinct.

LEEDS

Sunday **17 April**, 1.00 p.m.

Yorkshire Regional Branch

The Victoria Hotel, 28 Great George Street, Leeds, LS1 3DL.

DONCASTER

Saturday **30 April**, 1.00 p.m.

Debate: "How can we oppose the Trade Union Bill?"

Speakers:

Tosh McDonald: (National President ASLEF and Labour Party member)

Bill Martin (Socialist Party)

The Brewery Tap, 7 Young Street, Doncaster, DN1 3EL

MANCHESTER

Saturday **14 May**, 2.00 p.m.

The EU Referendum

Speaker: Paul Bennett

The Unicorn, 26 Church Street, Manchester, M4 1PW

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Archway Street Stall

Saturday, **2 April** - 11:00am - 1:00pm

In front of the Co-op, 11-19 Junction Road, Archway, London N19 5QT

A few minutes from Archway tube on the Piccadilly line. Including leafleting for Greater London Assembly election and plans for further such leafleting. Organised by North London Branch

Folkestone Street Stall (from 12 noon

Saturday, **30 April** - 12:00pm

Venue: Folkestone Town Hall, junction of Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street, CT20 1DY. Directions: About ten minutes walk from Folkestone Central rail station. Should there be any difficulty finding us on the day please phone this number: 07971 715569. Organised by Kent and Sussex Branch.

Brighton Discussion Group (7.30pm)

Tuesday, **10 May** - 7:30pm - 9:30pm

Venue: The Brighthelm Centre (Pelham Room - First Floor - lift available), North Road, Brighton BN1 1YD

Directions: About four minutes walk from Brighton rail station. Buses to and from nearby coastal towns and elsewhere run until quite late.

EC Meeting

Saturday **7 May**, Socialist Party's premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.



The futility of reformism

'That new soccer ball you just bought your child? If it came from China, it could have been made by workers who work up to 21 hours a day. That trendy mineral makeup on your face? A child in India could have spent long, hot days mining the sparkly mica in it ... click on SlaveryFootprint.org. The website is run by a non-profit working to rid the world of slave labor and human trafficking. By answering just a few questions, the website will tell you *how many slaves work for you*. Child laborers around the world make bricks, farm, weave rugs, dive for fish, work as prostitutes and soldiers, and dismantle toxic electronics. It's estimated that about 27 million people work under slavery conditions around the world, many with a direct connection to something you own or use right now' (charlotteobserver.com, 3 March). This site promotes social activism not socialism, reform not revolution. Socialists as individuals may eschew meat, Microsoft, or motor cars, but know until the majority of us wage slaves come

to understand capitalism and act to overthrow it, little will change.

No war but the class war

'Litter has become a weapon of class war in Britain, where a campaign urging people to Clean for the Queen has stirred both trash-tidying volunteers and howls of anger. The campaign, backed by charity Keep Britain Tidy, urges people to spruce up their communities before Queen Elizabeth II's 90th birthday, which is being marked in June. What better way could we show our gratitude to Her Majesty than to clean up our country? the campaign asks on its website ... But some find the idea of tidying up to honor a hereditary monarch insulting. Graham Smith of anti-monarchy group Republic suggests the Queen put some of her fortune into cleaning the streets as a thank you for her years of privilege' (abcnews.go.com, 4 March). It is of no consequence who sits on the throne, or whether a republic is established. Nothing will change as long as capitalism reigns.

Another old parasite

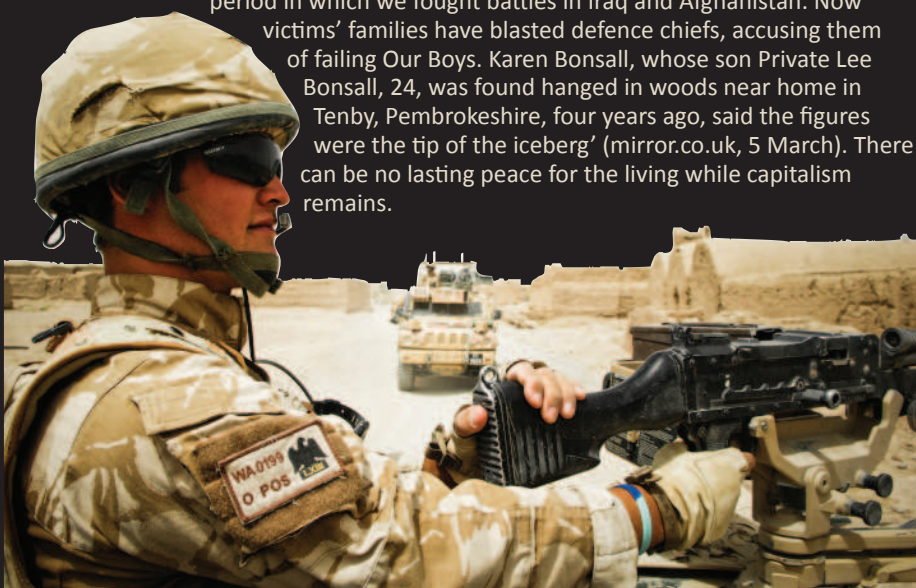
According to government figures released earlier this year, up to 2.4 million People in Zimbabwe are described as food insecure. The same cannot be said for President Mugabe who 'has already been in charge for 36 years and, at 92, is the world's oldest serving head of state. But the veteran leader says he is not done yet. Mugabe plans to live until he is 100 and indicated that he would remain president for life...' (newsweek.com, 4 March). We are informed that a 92kg cake was shared with his entourage and 92 balloons were released on the occasion of his \$1m birthday bash. This in a country where the average life expectancy is 57 years and over 70 percent exist below the poverty line. There is no reason for our class to celebrate with former *freedom fighter* Mugabe on the anniversary of Zimbabwe's *independence* later this month.

UNacceptable

That the United Nations has a long list of failures comes as no surprise to socialists knowing that the 99 percent worldwide experience war and want – endemic features of capitalism. Recent additions to this list include new allegations of sexual exploitation and Zero Discrimination Day: '... commemorated on March 1, there was an implicit commitment by the 193 member states to abhor all forms of discrimination...including against women, minorities, indigenous people, gays and lesbians and those suffering from AIDS. But apparently there seems to be one notable exception – refugees and migrants ...' (ipsnews.net, 3 March). John Boyd Orr, former director of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, was candid in stating: 'a world of peace and friendship, a world with the plenty which modern science had made possible was a great ideal. But those in power had no patience with such an ideal. They said it was not practical politics' (*Daily Herald*, 29 July 1948).

Fighting their wars

'One of our servicemen or women commits suicide almost every two weeks, figures obtained by the *Sunday People* reveal. Nearly 400 troops killed themselves between 1995 and 2014. Hundreds ended their misery on military bases over a 20-year period in which we fought battles in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now victims' families have blasted defence chiefs, accusing them of failing Our Boys. Karen Bonsall, whose son Private Lee Bonsall, 24, was found hanged in woods near home in Tenby, Pembrokeshire, four years ago, said the figures were the tip of the iceberg' (mirror.co.uk, 5 March). There can be no lasting peace for the living while capitalism remains.



FREE LUNCH

